

## Razed Section Ghost Town

# Family Alone in Area B Has Lost 1300 Neighbors

CPYRGHT

By S. L. Fishbein

Staff Reporter

A Southwest Washington couple qualifies hands down as the loneliest family in town these days. Thirteen hundred neighboring families have moved away in recent months.

Mr. and Mrs. Avon Harding, 348 E st. sw., live in the last occupied house in Redevelopment Area B.

The 76-acre tract, bounded generally by South Capitol, E, Eye and 4th sts. sw., now resembles a cross-section of a ghost town and a low-level aerial photo of Berlin in 1945. The two-story Harding home stands on the northwest edge of the almost-cleared redevelopment area.

How does it feel to live alone in a huge empty area that once swarmed with life?

"It can get pretty quiet and lonely around here," Harding told a reporter. His lighted window was the only sign of life in the vast darkness.

"Apparently," said Harding, who is 24, "some of the youngsters think everyone has moved away. A few nights ago they started throwing stones through the windows."

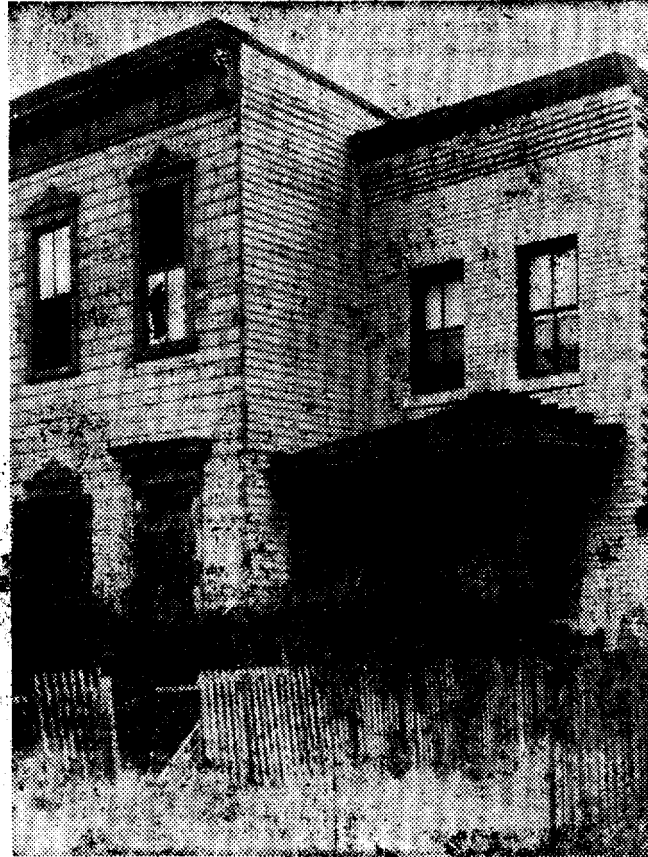
Harding has a simple explanation:

"We would have been out of here long ago, but I'm having a devil of a time processing a GI loan for my new house in Northeast," he said. His mother, Mrs. Nellie Harding, also lives in the house.

The Redevelopment Land Agency officials "have been wonderful to us," Harding said. "They haven't pushed us around at all and in fact they have done everything possible to help us get re-located."

The Hardings expect to be out of the house sometime this month. Meantime, he said, "I don't relish the thought of being the only one left. It isn't pleasant to have to leave my wife and mother here alone." The situation is aggravated by the fact that Harding goes to night school.

Alerted several times to probable moving dates, the family has packed and unpacked more times than it cares to remember. "We hope



Staff Photo

This home at 348 E st. sw. is last home occupied in Area B

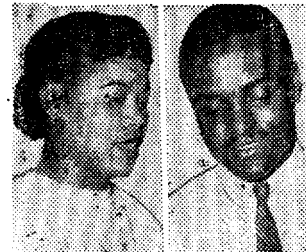
the next time is the last time," said Harding's wife, Loretta.

The family's three years on E st. have been happy ones, according to Harding, and moving day won't be all smiles.

But the dark windows down the street, the piles of brick and jagged silhouettes of half-demolished buildings are poor substitutes for neighbors, the Hardings find.

Harding works for a hush-hush Federal agency and at first was reluctant to tell his story in the belief that security rules forbid it.

His superior ruled that the story could be told, but no pictures of Harding could be used. A higher-ranking agency offi-



Mr. and Mrs. Avon Harding  
... "it can be pretty quiet"

cial finally decided that the Nation's security might not suffer if a story and pictures were used as long as Harding's agency was not named.